

the spread of STDs and HIV into the general population.

Yours faithfully,
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Book reviews

Bacterial vaginosis. By W I van der Meijden. (Pp 121; Dfl 35.) The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1987.

This book, described by the author as a "thesis", consists essentially of a series of seven separate papers with introductory and concluding chapters. It is therefore difficult to read as a text on bacterial vaginosis and will be of limited value to those wanting to learn more about this condition. As most of the chapters have to stand on their own there is much repetition, which is disconcerting but probably unavoidable with this format.

If one then evaluates this book as a research document there will be disappointment. I can find very little that is original or adds to our knowledge of this perplexing condition. The main message that comes across is the author's desire to have bacterial vaginosis renamed "clue cell positive discharge". Much of the data produced, however, refers to a reasonable population size and is well presented. Thus those wishing to pursue further research may find some aspects helpful, though important questions—such as the origin of bacterial vaginosis and its relation to sexual intercourse—still remain unanswered.

R S Pattman

Sexually transmitted diseases. Edited by A E Jephcott. (Pp 87; £10.) London: Public Health Laboratory Service, 1987.

This is a Public Health Laboratory Service publication that deals essentially with the laboratory diagnosis of some of the commoner infections seen in genitourinary medicine clinics.

In the introduction the contents are described as being a "practical guide to the techniques which are available at present, and should assist laboratory managers in assessing the current status of various techniques and their relevance to clinicians treating their patients." It is pleasant to see this different approach, although I am not certain which of the two targeted groups will derive the most benefit. Much information is provided about the precise ingredients of growth and transport media coupled with other technical laboratory detail, about which I am not competent to comment and therefore cannot assess its value to the laboratory worker. Writing as a clinician in these times of stringent budgetary control I am disappointed that financial matters, such as the cost of reagents and the degree of labour involved, are not detailed. Regrettably, when managing a clinic and having to choose between certain available screening tests these factors have to be considered.

The book deals with syphilis, gonorrhoea, *Chlamydia trachomatis* infections, anaerobic vaginosis, genital herpes, hepatitis and infections with retroviruses including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and finally chancroid. There are therefore some obvious omissions. The applied clinical content throughout the book is sound, but I have some minor quibbles. Although enzyme linked immunoassays (ELISAs) for syphilis are not yet routinely available, a brief comment would have been useful. High blind vaginal swabs are listed without qualification alongside visualised cervical swabs for the diagnosis of gonorrhoea—sacrilege to the genitourinary physician! As a clinician wanting to use the laboratory properly, I am most disappointed that the comparative value of cell culture, direct immunofluorescence, and antigen detection by immunological assay are not examined more closely, particularly regarding the widely reported lower specificity of the immunological assay and its failure to diagnose rectal infection accurately. The chapter of most practical benefit to the clinician is on hepatitis and retroviruses, and it does attempt to address the question of cost. However, it contains the bizarre statement that "another cause of glandular fever is the AIDS virus (HIV)", which I can only assume is a printing error.

Dr Jephcott states in his introduction "in no other speciality (than genitourinary medicine) does the clinician rely so heavily on the microbiology laboratory or (does) the quality of treatment offered to the patient depend so greatly on the service it provides." I heartily endorse this statement, and it behoves the conscientious clinician to have some knowledge of the laboratory techniques used. With minor reservations I commend this book to the genitourinary physician, and especially to those in training. The book is priced at £10 (including postage) cash with order, from PHLS Supplies, 61 Colindale Avenue, London NW9 5DF, England.

R S Pattman

Living with AIDS and HIV. By D Miller. (Pp 136; £20 hard back, £7.95 paperback.) Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1987.

This book is described as a practical manual for people with AIDS and for those who are human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) antibody positive, as well as for their carers and counsellors. It is divided into seven chapters, which deal with the virus and its spread, the clinical manifestations of HIV, coming to terms with the diagnosis, practical adjustments, psychological adjustments, relationship adjustments, and a final summary.

The first two chapters provide a very readable introduction to the condition, which is suitable not only for people with the virus but also for carers and counsellors. The chapter on practical adjustments is very useful, but it is naturally restricted by the author's experience. For instance, advice for drug misusers occupied some 21 lines compared with four and a half pages for safe sex. Important omissions were the problems of dealing with antibody positive children and pregnancies, contraception, social security benefits, and practical advice about simple cheap healthy eating. On the whole, however, I think that these are fairly minor omissions and they in no way detract from the overall usefulness of the book.

The largest chapter in the book is devoted to psychological adjustments and covers problems such as stress, anxiety, depression, obsessive states, and how to cope with these problems. There is a chapter devoted to relationship adjustment, which I think is of value irrespective of sexuality.

All in all I think that this is an excellent book, which fulfils its aim of being a practical manual to patients infected with HIV as well as to their carers and counsellors. I would thoroughly recommend it.

R P Brettell